

**Montana Department of Military Affairs  
Disaster & Emergency Services Division  
State Emergency Coordination Center**

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**Situation Report for August 6, 2003** (issued @ 14:00 hrs.)

***Wildfires of 2003***

**Attention \*** - New information shown in today's report displayed in ***Bold Italics*** type.

I. - **Background Information:**

- Due to favorable weather conditions beginning on Saturday August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003 minimal precipitation helped firefighting efforts across the state and in isolated areas. The major end of the season weather event is predicted to occur closer to the end of September or first part of October. A return to high temperatures, drying conditions and possibly thunderstorms is expected later in the week. A vigilant fire watch is expected to continue as a result of these predictions.

II. - **Current Montana Fire Conditions:** (as reported to NRCC *August 6th, 2003 (2115)*)

***Northern Rockies Preparedness Level = 5  
National Preparedness Level = 4***

***Light initial attack – 22 new fires for 226 acres***

- ***Flathead Area Command (Mann) is managing the large fires on the Flathead National Forest, Kootenai National Forest and Glacier National Park***
  - ***Wedge Canyon – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Bennett), 25,561 acres, 50% contained, 20 miles E of Eureka, Montana.***
  - ***Robert – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Stam), 23,935 acres, 50% contained, 8 miles N of Columbia Falls, Montana. Decrease in acreage due to more accurate mapping. Transfer of command to Type 1 Incident Management Team (Ferguson) scheduled for 8/6 (0600).***
  - ***Trapper Creek Complex – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Raley). Complex is 20,540 acres, 40% contained. This Complex is made up of the Trapper Creek (15,910 acres – 40% contained), Paul Bunyan (300 acres – 100% contained), Wolf Gun (4,330 acres – 35% contained) and Trout (1/4 acre – 50% contained) fires located 45 statute miles NE of Kalispell, Montana.***
  - ***Little Salmon Creek Complex – This 12,375 acre lightning caused Wildland Fire Use complex is located 47 miles SE of Kalispell, Montana***

*in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. This complex, made up of the Pagoda (125 acres) and the Little Salmon (12,250 acres), is being managed to accomplish resource objectives. Rath's Fire Use Management Team will begin transitioning Wednesday, 8/6.*

- *Booth – 1,650 acres, 100% contained, 17 miles S of Colstrip, Montana.*
- *Treasure County Complex – 9,998 acres, contained and controlled. This Complex was made up of the Johnny (7,497 acres), Starks (1,053 acres) and Earl (1,448 acres) fires located 8 miles S of Hysham, Montana.*
- *Black Frog Complex - Type 1 Incident Management Team (Frye), 90% contained. This Complex is made up of the Blackwall fire (4,515 acres), located 32 miles N of Salmon, Idaho and Frog Pond (2,082 acres), as well as numerous concentrations of spots on both fires for a total of 7,275 acres located 34 miles S of Hamilton, Montana.*
- *Porcupine Creek – 1,000 acres, contained and controlled, 7 miles N of Nashua, MT.*

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE GREAT FALLS MT  
419 AM MDT WED AUG 6 2003***

***WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE***

*Today - Scattered Showers And Thunderstorms. Partly Cloudy. Highs 79 To 89.*

*Tonight - Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Mainly This Evening. Becoming Partly Cloudy. Lows 46 To 56.*

*Thursday - Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs 81 To 91.*

***CENTRAL MONTANA***

*Today - Partly Cloudy. Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms...Mainly In The Afternoon. Highs In The Lower 80s To Lower 90s.*

*Tonight - Partly Cloudy. Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Lows In The 50s.*

*Thursday - Partly Cloudy. Highs In The Lower 80s To Lower 90s.*

***SOUTHWEST MONTANA***

*Today...Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs In The Mid 70s To Mid 80s.*

*Tonight...Mostly Clear. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Lows In The Mid 40s To Lower 50s.*

*Thursday...Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms In The Afternoon. Highs In The Lower 70s To Mid 80s.*

***EASTERN AND SOUTHERN MONTANA***

*Lake Wind Advisory For Fort Peck Lake This Afternoon And Evening.*

*Today - Partly Cloudy. Windy East. A Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms East This Morning. A Chance Of Thunderstorms South And West This Afternoon. Some Storms May Contain Strong Gusty Winds. Highs In The Upper 80s To Upper 90s.*

*Tonight - Mostly Cloudy East...Partly Cloudy West. A Chance Of Thunderstorms Some Storms May Contain Strong Gusty Winds In The Evening. Lows In The Mid 50s To Mid 60s.*

*Thursday - Mostly Sunny Northeast...Partly Cloudy Elsewhere. A Chance Of Thunderstorms Southwest. Highs In The 90s.*

### **III. - Summary of Actions being taken by Local Government Officials:**

Local government resources from various jurisdictions have been actively engaged in fire fighting efforts, particularly during the past several days. The evacuation of residents whose properties have been threatened have been conducted as required.

| <b><u>Local Emergency and Disaster Declarations</u></b> |   | <b><u>Date Filed</u></b> |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Cascade County  | Emergency Declaration (Box Canyon/Long Mtn.)    | 7/15/03                  |
| Garfield County   | Disaster Declaration (Missouri Breaks)          | 7/15/03                  |
| Beaverhead County                                       | Emergency Resolution (multiple fires)           | 7/17/03                  |
| Ravalli County  | Emergency Declaration (Big Creek)               | 7/20/03                  |
| Flathead County   | Emergency Declaration (Wedge Canyon)            | 7/21/03                  |
| Sanders County  | Resolution (Stage II Fire Restrictions)         | 7/29/03                  |
| <i>Fallon County</i>                                    | <i>Resolution (Stage I Fire Restrictions)</i>   | <i>8/04/03</i>           |
| <i>CSKT Flathead</i>                                    | <i>Resolution (Tribal/Forest/Range Closure)</i> | <i>8/04/03</i>           |

### **IV. - Summary of State Activities and Resources Committed:**

#### **State, Local and Tribal Declarations:**

On 7/18/03, Governor Judy Martz signed an Executive Order (# 14-03) in which she declared a statewide emergency thereby enabling mobilization of state resources (including the Montana National Guard) should they be needed to help protect the life, health and/or property of Montana's citizens.

The Flathead County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003 stating that because the weather forecasts indicated no relief from the dry conditions and fires continued in the county it was "resolved that stage II fire restrictions on all State forested lands and all private forested lands open to the public" will be in effect until otherwise stated.

#### **FEMA Declarations:**

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Declaration approved on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003 for Missouri Breaks Complex fire.

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Declaration approved on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003 for

Flathead County's Wedge Canyon and Roberts fires.

Requests for State Assistance:

- The Montana National Guard is assisting "initial attack" fire suppression operations by supplying 3 UH-60 (Blackhawk) Helicopters modules and one UH-1 Helicopter module and approximately 51 soldiers. One Blackhawk helicopter module is currently assigned to the Flathead Interagency Dispatch Center, another is assigned to the Helena Interagency Dispatch Center, and the third is assigned to Missoula. The UH-1 helicopter module is currently deployed to Billings. The Montana National Guard Personnel Resources currently allocated to wild land fire suppression duties stands at 51. The National Guard will be rotating in new air crews in Helena and Kalispell this weekend.
- One NG Liaison Officer has been assigned to the Northern Rockies Coordination Center (NGCC) in Missoula.
- MT Highway Patrol and MT Department of Transportation are supporting fire efforts with local jurisdictions and fire management to limit travel disturbances.

**Status of State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)**

- Montana DES is providing support to local governments through the State Emergency Coordination Center in Helena. The SECC is currently operating at Activation Level III. Level III operations include a full staff 0800-1700 during weekdays with a duty officer on call after hours. Weekend operations will be staffed at Level II from 0800-1700 unless it becomes necessary to advance to a higher activation level.

The State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) will continue to monitor conditions and is prepared to provide 24-hour incident support to local governments. After office hours (i.e., 1700-0700) support is available through the DES Duty Officer who may be reached at (406) 841-3911.

**Addendums to Situation Report**

As of: **August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

**Road Closures:** Information is current as of 08-06-03

Southwest

U.S. 93 is now open 24 hours a day with no restrictions over Lost Trail Pass. Still closed are all trails between the Gibbonsville road and Highway 43, trailheads at Cabinet and Richardson creeks, the Anderson Mountain road, and the May Creek campground. ***The Idaho side of the Gibbonsville road, from the Montana line to Gibbonsville, Idaho, has reopened. The entire route is now open between Montana and Idaho.***

Northwest

More than half of Glacier National Park is OPEN. Access is available by U.S. Highways 2, 49, 89, and the historic Going to the Sun Road from St. Mary to Logan Pass. The Inside North Fork Road (north and south of Polebridge) is open from Fish Creek to Big Prairie, just north of Polebridge, but is closed from Big Prairie north. ***The Going-to-the-Sun Road is open from Avalanche to Logan Pass between the***

*hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. only. No stopping is allowed from Avalanche to Logan Pass. 24-hour travel on the Going-to-the-Sun Road is permitted between St. Mary and Logan Pass only. Apgar Village in the Lake McDonald Valley, Many Glacier, St. Mary, Two Medicine, Goat Haunt, and the backcountry area of the Belly River are open. Due to the Wedge Canyon Fire, The North Fork area of Glacier National Park is closed to visitor use at this time.*

**Reported Major Fire Activity:      Report Date: August 5th, 2003**

***Wedge Canyon:***

|                                     |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Residences threatened: 100</i>   | <i>Commercial Property: 7</i> | <i>Outbuildings/Other: 29</i> |
| <i>Estimated Cost: \$13,100,000</i> | <i>% contained: 50%</i>       |                               |

***Roberts Fire:***

|                                    |                               |                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Residences threatened: 0</i>    | <i>Commercial Property: 6</i> | <i>Outbuildings/Other: 10</i> |
| <i>Estimated Cost: \$8,100,000</i> | <i>% contained: 50%</i>       |                               |

***Trapper Creek Complex:***

|                                    |                               |                              |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Residences threatened: 0</i>    | <i>Commercial Property: 3</i> | <i>Outbuildings/Other: 8</i> |
| <i>Estimated Cost: \$2,100,000</i> | <i>% contained: 40%</i>       |                              |

***Little Salmon Complex:***

|                                  |                               |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Residences threatened: 6</i>  | <i>Commercial Property: 0</i> | <i>Outbuildings/Other: 12</i> |
| <i>Estimated Cost: \$277,000</i> | <i>% contained: NR%</i>       |                               |

***Black Frog Complex:***

|                                    |                               |                              |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Residences threatened: 0</i>    | <i>Commercial Property: 0</i> | <i>Outbuildings/Other: 0</i> |
| <i>Estimated Cost: \$9,100,000</i> | <i>% contained: 90%</i>       |                              |

**Current DES Situation Report From Flathead Area Command:**

Wildfires in Glacier have caused the need for the evacuation of west Glacier and Apgar. There are approximately 250 homes in the area. The local Red Cross chapter has established a shelter in White Fish at the North Valley Hospital Basement.

**Fire Restrictions and Closures**

| <u>Zone</u>          | <u>Restrictions</u>                                       | <u>Effective Date</u> |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Northwestern Zone    | Stage II Restrictions                                     | July 28, 2003         |
| Southwestern Zone    | Stage II Restrictions                                     | July 28, 2003         |
| Central Montana Zone | Stage II Restrictions                                     | July 28, 2003         |
| South Central Zone   | Stage II Restrictions                                     | July 28, 2003         |
| Eastern Montana Zone |   |                       |
|                      | <u>Stage I Restrictions (Billings)</u>                    | July 18, 2003         |
|                      | <u>Stage II Restrictions</u>                              |                       |
|                      | State & Private: Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass counties | July 25, 2003         |
|                      | Federal: Treasure, Musselshell, Bighorn, Yellowstone      | July 18, 2003         |
|                      | <u>Stage I Restrictions (Lewistown)</u>                   | July 21, 2003         |
|                      | <u>Stage II Restrictions</u>                              |                       |
|                      | State & Private: Liberty County                           |                       |
|                      | Federal: Chouteau, Fergus, Judith Basin, Wheatland        | July 25, 2003         |
|                      | <u>Stage I Restrictions (Miles City)</u>                  | July 26, 2003         |

**General Fire Information and Severity to Date**

- Plum Creek has closed all private and public use on their holdings, logging operations are also

shut down

- Currently there are no overnight facilities at Apgar or West Glacier.
- Large Season ending storm not expected until mid-September or early October.
- Closures are likely to remain in effect for the remainder of the season.
- Energy Release Component  
Lincoln Ranger District reports component same as 1988 when the Canyon Creek Fire started  
Helena reports component is 14 points higher than when the Cave Gulch Fire started in 2000
- NW Area command  
Burnout initiated by fire management on the Roberts and Wedge Canyon have proven successful to date
- General Cost for fires under Northern Rockies Coordination and acreage total [from Northern Rockies Priorities List -acreage estimate on active fires]:  
Cost: \$41.8 million                      Acreage: 119,192

***Web Links:***

***Glacier National Park Fire Management:***

<http://www.nps.gov/glac/resources/fires.htm>

***Northern Rockies Interagency Information Center***

<http://fs.fed.us/r1/fire/2003fires/index.htm>